

Page 6, section entitled, 'DRAWINGS - - FIGURES'. Replace with the following new section:

--DRAWINGS - - FIGURES

The drawing contains a flowchart of the process of accepting noun choices from the user and enacting branches of the narrative driven by those choices.

Fig. 1 illustrates the process of control using the invention.

Fig. 1-100 represents the beginning of the game.

Fig. 1-110 is where the game presents the current state of the story. This could be done with text, graphics, audio, or live action.

Fig. 1-120 is where the game presents the game's nouns to be selected. The choices should be dependent upon the current state of the story.

Fig. 1-130 is where the game checks if the player has made a choice.

Fig. 1-140 represents the case where the story situation has not changed, yet its presentation may need to be updated in a story neutral manner.

Fig. 1-150 is where the chosen noun is introduced into the story.

Fig. 1-160 is where the game determines how the characters react to the noun introduced.

Fig. 1-170 determines if the reactions have changed the situation. Note the special case, 190, is reached only if the situation has changed in a way that ends the game.

Fig. 1-180 is where the game determines how the story environment and characters are modified by the change in situation.

Fig. 1-190 represents an end condition of the game has been reached.

Pages 7 thru 8, section entitled, 'DETAILED DESCRIPTION - - FIG. 1 - ILLUSTRATIVE EMBODIMENT'. Replace with the following new section:

--DETAILED DESCRIPTION - - FIG. 1 - ILLUSTRATIVE EMBODIMENT

The invention can be illustrated in a single cycle of gameplay. We will use the story of Little Red Riding Hood as an example, while we follow the flowchart.

The process begins (Fig. 1-100) typically with an introduction to the game's story. In our example, Little Red Riding Hood's mother sends her into the woods to visit her grandmother, for the first time by herself.

The invention next presents the situation in which the player will interact. (Fig. 1-110) In our example, Little Red Riding Hood is now walking, somewhat nervously, through the woods.

Next, (Fig. 1-120) the invention makes a list of story relevant nouns available to the player. Our example will offer three nouns: berries, woodsman, and wolf.

Should the player NOT choose from the list, (Fig. 1-140) the invention simply continues to present the situation, updating non-plot based story elements. Little Red Riding Hood continues down the path. Perhaps she pauses briefly to tie her shoes. This lets the game seem alive while the player makes her decision.

When the player does choose a noun, (Fig. 1-150) That object or subject is introduced into the environment, hopefully in a believable fashion. The wolf

might jump out from behind a tree, or a bush with berries comes into view during her walk, or the woodsman is first heard chopping a tree, attracting Little Red Riding Hood to him. This is where the narrative branches.

(Fig. 1-160) represents what happens in the game as a result of the noun's introduction: Little Red Riding Hood runs away from the wolf, or she begins picking berries, or she talks with the woodsman. The invention requires that these results are determined from the current state of the characters. Initially, Little Red Riding Hood is afraid, therefore she might run from the wolf. But if her fears are eased, perhaps after picking berries or talking with a nice woodsman, she might, instead of running, talk with the wolf. Note, the player does not determine how any character in the game reacts. He only chooses what is introduced into the story.

After the environment and situation has reacted to the noun's introduction, next (Fig. 1-170) the invention determines if the reaction resulted in a change to the situation and/or environment.

If the situation and/or the environment were not changed, then the current situation continues to be presented. (Fig. 1-140)

If the reaction changes the situation and/or the environment, then the invention produces (Fig. 1-180) a new situation and/or environment to be presented. Here also, the state of characters are modified along with other parameters that might only be reflected in future encounters or results.

Alternately, (Fig. 1-190) the story may have reached an end point, and instead of returning the invention's game cycle, an appropriate 'end of the story' scene is presented.

All branching narratives contain a cycle of gameplay where the storytelling mechanism waits for a user's input and then reacts to it. This invention operates from a type of input new to branching narratives. It offers the simple but powerful mechanism of allowing players to introduce story relevant nouns into the narrative environment. Each noun triggers a change in the story. The changes arise from interactions between the current situation, the environment including characters present, and the noun that has been introduced.

Although the illustrative embodiment above contains many specificities, these should not be construed as limiting the scope of the invention but as merely providing illustrations of some of the presently useful embodiments of this invention. For example, the presentation section might be a scrolling page of text that describes the events in written language, as if the implementation were a book that reacted to the reader. The presentation system might be an actual stage with real actors presenting nouns and reacting to the audience's choices.

Thus the scope of the invention should be determined by the appended claims and their legal equivalents, rather than by the examples given.

Pages 8 thru 9, section entitled, 'OPERATION - - Fig. 1'. Erase this section. It has been folded into the previous section.

Pages 9 thru 19, section entitled, 'DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE INVENTION'. Replace with the following new section:

i. Introduction

This invention provides a system that enables simple but rich navigation of interactive narratives. It enables an ease of use significantly better than any prior art. Its mechanism is truly unique and beneficial in its field. With the invention, one or more people can participate in an interactive: motion picture, television or audio program, live theater, or a computer-based or computer-generated story. It lets participants determine the course of a narrative. Players are able to explore the events of a story (in the form of motion picture images, television images, live theater, audio, computer-based images, or computer-generated images) with greater control and less confusion than ever before.

ii. Purpose

The purpose and use of this invention sits squarely in the field of entertainment. It is a mechanism which opens up narratives for exploration at the cause and effect level of a story's sequence of events. The invention can be implemented by any device or performer that 1.) transmits a narrative and 2.) accepts input that controls its transmission.

The invention also overlaps the fields of education, simulation, counseling, and therapy, similar to how regular storytelling overlaps them, but the invention offers unique benefits for those fields.

iii. Comments on Style

The description will show, in sections, how to use the claims and prior art to create this invention. Since interactive narratives are largely artistic endeavors, a great range of variations must be allowed. However, all implementations will use a significant portion of the claims. Claim 16 is essential. Some of the claims are considered fundamental to the invention, and others will be optional.

Each claim will be discussed as to its merits over previous methods.

Each step will be demonstrated by an example. All of the examples will be taken from a hypothetical implementation of the story of Little Red Riding Hood.

1. Breaking a Story Down into Nouns.

For the purpose of this invention, we define a story as a sequence of events. We define an event as a continuous period of activity, involving a single or multiple characters, reacting to a specified noun. The invention allows for additional storytelling, presented between events for continuity. For the remainder of this section, we will use the terms elements and story elements to refer to these nouns.

As per claim 16.c., developers should identify elements (nouns) that advance their game's story. Developers should create distinct symbols, labels, phrases, or other identifiers for each element. A player will use these elements to control the narrative. Compared to prior art, the introduction of nouns is a powerful tool for advancing a story and affecting the characters within it. No other prior art device uses the introduction of nouns to trigger events as the primary control system for advancing an interactive narrative. Introducing elements is fundamental to this invention.

For example, if we examine the tale of Little Red Riding Hood, we identify the following story elements:

Mother at Home
Little Red Riding Hood
Berries in the Forest
The Wolf
Grandma's House
Grandma
The Woodsman

These nouns are the primary building blocks of the story of Little Red Riding Hood. The invention uses them to trigger events which progress the narrative. Note that we will not make available, Mother at Home, in any of the lists presented. She is only used to begin the story. Not all elements of a game's story need to be used to control that game. But it's worthwhile to identify every noun that could potentially be used to control a game.

2. Introducing the Narrative to the Player.

Nearly always, a narrative begins by presenting the environment and the initial characters and their situation. It is typically presented without interaction, as are the introductory sequences of prior art. By beginning each game the same way, players can be certain that they are starting at the beginning. This provides a comfortable foundation for their explorations. As per claim 16.a., the simulated environment and (as per claim 16.b.) the first simulated characters are typically

introduced here as well. These two pieces of claim 16 are common to prior art, and are necessary for every branching narrative.

In our example, when the game begins, the player is presented with a scene where the mother sends her daughter into the woods to visit her grandma.

3. Using Settings to Constrain Combinatorial Explosion

Every successful branching narrative must cope with the problem of combinatorial explosion. Combinatorial explosion in this invention would result when there are so many different ways to order the introduction of story elements, developing all of the resulting events would prove too expensive. Therefore, one of the invention's mechanisms must let designers limit the combinations of element introductions. This allows cost effective development. Fortunately, narrative structure provides many natural and effective means to constrain the number of resulting events. They are scenes, locales, chapters, acts, or settings. This document uses the term `setting` for these structures.

As per claim 18, the invention uses settings to limit the events that can happen during those segments of the narrative. For a given setting, the developer, or the simulation itself, decides which set of elements will be available to the player during that setting. The use of settings to limit elements available in a narrative is unique to this invention. Although, not required for this invention, settings will be used frequently for limiting the combinatorial explosion of potential results.

There are two settings in the tale of Little Red Riding Hood, 'The Forest' and 'Grandma's House'. In our example, some nouns will be allowed only in the Forest. Other nouns are allowed only in Grandma's House, and some nouns will be available in both settings.

Forest

berries

wolf

woodsman

grandma's house

Grandma's House

wolf

grandma

woodsman

In this example, the nouns available in each setting have been predetermined, as per claim 17.

4. Simulating the Characters.

The construction of this invention requires goal driven simulations of the main character or main characters. This document does not describe how to implement a character simulation since that is considered prior art. Here we describe using such a simulation in a manner unique to this invention, as per claim 16.b.

It's a lot of fun to play with a puppet dancing to strings on your fingers. It makes players feel powerful and in control. It's even more fun to have a pet that

plays with the things you give it. Unlike current adventure games, with this invention, players do not directly control the character's steps or actions. Players influence the actions of the character by introducing nouns into a setting which trigger events significant to the story.

With this invention, whenever an event is triggered, enacted, and resolved, the simulated characters can change. Their emotions, goals, physicality, and personality can all change as a result of an event. This supports a narrative's common practice of revealing how a character changes during a story. In implementations of this invention, simulated characters should directly reflect their changes. In order to do that, this invention requires two capabilities from the simulations' implementation.

4.a. The character simulation must provide feedback about physical and emotional states. Exactly which types of states depend upon the story being told. (Detailed in section 5, below.)

4.b. Every character in the simulation must maintain a goal. They must be trying to accomplish that goal, perhaps with occasional, character oriented sidetracks. The player should be informed of that goal.

In our example, Little Red Riding Hood is implemented as a self motivated, simulated personality that acts like a little girl. By design, she will automatically seek to accomplish a goal.

example of 4.a. She shows her emotional states by what she says, by her animations, and by visual meters that indicate internal states.

example 4.b. When Little Red Riding Hood is trying to get to grandma's house she will be walking in the forest in a specific direction. To demonstrate her character's youthful nature, she occasionally chases a butterfly but resumes walking towards her goal immediately thereafter.

5. Generating a List of Elements

This section describes the heart of this invention. To recap the previous sections: The player has been introduced to a situation and its world, and she or he is watching simulated characters acting within a setting. Now it is time for the player to influence the story. As per claim 16.d., the player will be given a list of story elements they can use to branch the narrative. Introducing these nouns into the simulation generates events which advance the story. Noun operated branching of a narrative is unique to this invention. It is fundamental to this invention.

How a list of elements is generated is important. As per claim 17, the invention provides two methods for generating the list. The list could be pre-generated, as provided in our Little Red Riding Hood example. The list could also be generated programatically, based upon the narrative state. A device that determines the list at the time of presenting the list is programatically generating the list. A performer who determined the list during his or her performance would be `winging it`. Automatically generated lists should be based upon the

current situation and directions the story might head. One method might prune an exhaustive, predetermined list. A very sophisticated storytelling engine might create new characters, objects, activities, and/or places to present as event triggers.

Controlling the list of events during the narrative is an essential aspect of the invention. One method of constraining combinatorial explosion, the setting, has already been described. List construction is another tool for limiting permutations of story branches and therefore, development costs.

At the beginning of Little Red Riding Hood, she walks cautiously through the forest. The list generated for the player's consideration consists of:

wolf

woodsman

berries

In this example, the 'Grandma's House' element is pruned from the pre-generated list. This forces the player to pick some other kind of encounter before Little Red Riding Hood reaches Grandma's house. Consider it a primitive example of a programatically generated list. In other words, the list changes depending upon whether or not the player has already invoked an event.

6. Displaying the Noun List and Responding to the Player's Selection.

Once the list of nouns has been generated, the apparatus either interrupts the player with the list or waits for the player to request the list. As per claim 16.e., the player simply selects a noun from the list to use the invention. While

the effort of selecting an element is trivial, determining the noun that results in the most desirable outcome can be quite challenging. Players will quickly figure out how they want the story to progress. They will enjoy discovering how each element influences the story.

Choosing an noun which triggers a desired event is rewarding. Choosing an noun that produces an undesirable event is the penalty for not understanding the character or situation. The player is motivated to explore his options. An event's immediate enactment, after choosing an element, is more exciting than wandering around (often lost in) the large landscapes typical of prior art adventure games.

This invention creates experiences where an audience can easily explore the full richness of an interactive story and the characters within. The best implementations will supply, in their display of nouns, clues to an event's resolution. By observing the character's feedback, the user will begin to anticipate how that character will react to certain stimuli. However, interesting surprises could always be a lurking possibility.

The invention provides powerful tools to modify the simulation and advance the narrative. The tools are nouns introduced into a story which cause characters to react, interact, and change. As per claim 16.g, the outcome of every event potentially modifies: characters, objects, the environment, and the situation.

This invention supports game play where the sequence of events changes, as per claim 16.f. If a narrative's events occur in one sequence, then the story's

outcome is one experience. Different sequences of noun choices could produce different events. By offering players a set of tools in the form of nouns, they can create the experience that pleases them most.

In the example, a noun list will be offered after each event resolves. The list appropriate for the current situation is displayed. From the list players would make their selection. Below are the example's elements with a brief description of their enactment.

If the Little Red Riding Hood is in the Forest setting, the list contains:

wolf:

if she is afraid: she runs away.

if warned: she fools the wolf by claiming the woodsman has broken his ax.

otherwise: the wolf sweet talks her and learns grandma is alone.

woodsman:

warns her about wolves.

berries:

she goes on a berry hunt that makes her less afraid.

(Player participates during event.)

grandma's house:

if the wolf is fooled: show wolf's demise and end story.

otherwise: plays a static scene of arriving at the house and entering it.

If Little Red Riding Hood is in the Grandma's House setting, then this is the list:

wolf:

she discovers wolf in grandma's clothing and is chased around the house.

woodsman,

if wolf is chasing her: he dispatches the wolf.

otherwise: he congratulates her on arriving safely and doesn't return.

grandma:

she is surprised by the wolf and is eaten. End story.

7. Resolving an Event.

Once an element is introduced, the event it triggers must then be enacted. How an event plays out is entirely up to the developer. Respecting this invention's definition of an event, the playing or resolution of it should advance the story significantly. A person or creature is met and engaged. An item or sight or sound or idea meaningful to the plot is found, pondered, or otherwise reacted to. Perhaps a trial is encountered which must be overcome. Also, unremarkable actions or happenstance's might be useful as adornments or for stylistic flavor. Unremarkable events should be enacted sparingly if enacted at all. By virtue of enacting an event, the narrative is usually advanced, as per claim 16.f.

The most important feature of this invention is that an event should change something in the narrative. What might change includes: the characters, the environment, the list of elements available, and/or other aspects of the story.

An event doesn't have to change the narrative, but most events should. They keep the player's experience interesting. In prior art adventure games, it was very difficult to change the nature of a character. Players were given absolute control over the character's actions. With this invention, characters will be able to react more like characters in a story. Therefore the invention is able to tell stories better than prior art.

In our Little Red Riding Hood example, if the main character is still in the Forest, and the player introduces the `berries` element, the game would proceed to move Little Red Riding Hood until she reaches a patch of berries in the forest. Since the important part of event resolution is the changes it bestows upon the narrative, we should define an initial situation for Little Red Riding Hood. Let's say that upon leaving home, by herself for the first time, she begins the story very afraid of the forest. Her face and actions indicates this fear. When she encounters a patch of berries, she remembers that the forest can also harbor nice things. Nice thoughts soften fears. So, upon picking some berries she begins to feel a little less afraid. As a result, two things have changed in the narrative. First, she now has a nice basket of berries to give to her grandma, and second, Little Red Riding Hood feels less afraid. Perhaps her fear is lessened to the point where, when the wolf encounter is enacted, the girl listens to the wolf instead of running away.

Additionally, while the game is waiting for the user to make a choice, or the last choice failed to advance the story, continuity must be maintained. The environment and characters should continue to be presented, acting accordingly to the current context, as per claim 20. This is not very obvious, due to the step-wise method inherent to the invention.

8. Allowing Other Interactions

Game designers should consider the amount of interactivity a player is allowed during event enactment, as per claim 19. It has been mentioned previously, that in a fight situation, the player might be allowed to control a character's actions during the fight. Many times, in prior art adventure games, allowing full, player control over the actions of the characters proved very useful and fun, and this would be a lesser invention if it did not allow absolute player control in useful and fun situations. Therefore, within the event itself, sometimes it is best to let the player completely control the actions of the character. However, only the final resolution of the event should affect story. Interactions during the event should not affect the character's personality, goals, or the situation.

There is a fine point to be made here. Although the outcome of an interactive event could be determined by the player's actions, only the final result of the event should affect the story. A player might win or lose a fight a dozen different ways, but only the final result, the win or loss, should affect the story. The methods employed to gain the end of the event do not have to, and probably should not, affect the story. If it did, it would create another opportunity for a combinatorial explosion of outcomes.

An interactive story of Little Red Riding Hood might contain a simple game when she encounters berries. The event specific game might be a hunt for enough berries to fill her basket. Once the basket is full, event resolution concludes and the narrative resumes. These extra interactions improve the

player's enjoyment, drawing them closer to the story by involving them in the character's experiences.

9. Rewinding the Narrative

The next component of the invention is optional but highly recommended. As per claim 21, implementations of this invention should allow the player to change their mind about the sequence of events that leads up to a particular situation.

In simple language, the player is allowed to back up the story. For this to be possible, the device or performer must offer a mechanism the player uses to rewind the story. Such a mechanism might move the story backwards by the amount of one noun introduction (as per claim 21), a single setting, chapter, act, or other traditional groupings of events, as per claim 22. It must be able to restore the state of the narrative to what it was before an event, or multiple events, resolved. Once the story has been rewound, the player is able to choose an alternate sequence from the regressed state. He or she can then create a different narrative out of the elements offered. This is the mechanism that lets people explore and play with a story.

Additionally, some implementations of this invention could save the path of the current sequence of events to long term storage such as a hard disk or magnetic tape. Once stored, these highly personalized stories could be shared with others and shown like a video tape. The stored sequences could also be reloaded into the enabling device and allow the player to continue exploring the narrative.

In our Little Red Riding Hood example, suppose the player picked `Wolf` to trigger her first event. As the encounter proceeds, the player learns that Little Red Riding Hood was so afraid, walking alone in the woods, she runs away from the wolf before it has a chance to talk to her. As a result, Little Red Riding Hood's fear grows even greater. Using the rewind feature, the player backs up the story to the beginning and picks the noun, `Berries`, for the first choice. The resulting event calms the little girl until she is brave enough to talk to the wolf.

A. Summary

This detailed description has explained how to use the claims of this invention to create a branching narrative. It has demonstrated how the claims are unique and has discussed their advantages over previous methods. It has provided a complete example of implementation.

Begin with a narrative that can be described as discrete events which occur in a story's characters. Define settings to limit event branches. Determine which story elements (nouns) will trigger the events in each setting. Build simulated characters which react to the nouns according to each character's nature. Allow players to choose the order in which nouns are introduced into the game. Provide feedback about characters and the situation players can consider for later noun choices. Move from setting to setting as the narrative allows. Let the simulated characters and environment act between events for continuity. Allow users to interact in other ways, during event resolution, to add depth to the gameplay. Let users rewind the narrative, and let them explore alternate event sequences.

The example of Little Red Riding Hood has illustrated a potential implementation of this invention's claims. It has also indicated the depth possible in a branching narrative, even for a story as simple as a children's fable.

Remarks:

By the above amendment, Applicants have rewritten all claims to define the invention more particularly so as to overcome the technical rejections and define the invention patentability over the prior art.

The patent drawing has been completely redrawn to specifically illustrate the process.

The title has been amended to emphasize the novelty of the invention.

The following remarks address the office action's specific objections, by their number.

1. The features "(f)" and "(g)" were not in the expected order. The description of features discussed have been ordered correctly in the revised claims.
2. The drawing did not show how the invention works. A new drawing has been created to replace the original. It focuses solely on the invention's basic process.
3. Quotation of 35 U.S.C. 103(a). No action was requested.
4. Claims 1-15 were rejected as being unpatentable over the personal computer game, "Final Fantasy VIII". Claims have been dropped or revised and narrowed to separate the invention from prior art, including "Final Fantasy VIII".

Regarding the example; "FF VIII" is similar to art as discussed in the original application -- page 2, third paragraph (second full paragraph). Please see amendment on page 3 of this document.

“FF VIII” is operated by choosing verbs that are enacted by a game avatar. The proposed invention uses only nouns, not verbs, and no avatar is required. “FF VIII” does not allow the user to introduce nouns into the environment. All nouns in its list of choices depend upon implied verbs, such as USE or GIVE. The cited example, Fig 1, displays a list entitled, ‘COMMAND’. The list offers: Attack, Draw, and Magic. ‘Attack’ and ‘Draw’ are verbs. The noun, ‘Magic’, implies the verb CAST, as in ‘cast magic’.

Nouns listed in the invention’s mechanism are completely independent of verbs enacted by an avatar. The proposed invention simply allows the user to introduce nouns into a narrative environment. That environment then responds to them.

There now exists a software product that uses the proposed invention. It has been recognized by the game industry as an innovation in game design. The product is, “The Witch’s Yarn”. It has been commercially available for over a year. See Attachment 3. Not only it is successfully generating revenue, it has earned critical acclaim in the press for its innovations. See Attachment 5.

“The Witch’s Yarn” was picked by the 2006 Independent Game Festival competition as a finalist in the category of “Innovation in Game Design”. It was one of five finalists from about 100 applicants. The IGF is the premier competition festival in the international game industry. See Attachment 4.

The Witch’s Yarn is available as shareware from several online websites. It runs on MS Windows and Macintosh. It can be downloaded and experienced without cost from:

<http://www.mousechief.com/>

<http://www.manifestogames.com/>

Other game websites carrying the title can be found via internet search engines.

Regarding objections to claims 12-14, they have been revised and narrowed and condensed into the amending claims 21 and 22. Their method of rewind depends upon the sequence of nouns introduced. This affords the unexpected result of simpler operation over prior art. Reversing by navigating through the sequence of nouns introduced allows the user to see the path taken more clearly than prior art, as per amended claim 21. Rewinding over familiar narrative groupings allows for greater control as the sequence of nouns grows long, as per amended claim 22.

Also, neither "Final Fantasy VIII" nor Knight, nor any other prior art implements comprehensive rewind capability. If the invention was obvious, because of its advantages, those skilled in the art surely would have implemented it by now. The fact that those skilled in the art have not implemented the invention, despite its advantages, indicates that it is not obvious.

Regarding objections to claim 2; claim 2 has been amended by claim 17. It now focuses upon a list of nouns. It allows, over prior art, greater flexibility of design. Verb based systems used by prior art limit a story's expressiveness. In them, the main character avatar is limited to a few actions. These few actions are imposed in order to reduce development requirements. The avatar's limited actions allow for only a few forms of

expression. This is required in the prior art because the avatar must remain under the user's control. In the proposed invention, introducible nouns allow characters in the narrative freedom to react without limits. Therefore generating a list of introducible nouns produces the unexpected result of offering more dramatic freedom.

Regarding objections to claim 3; claim 3 has been amended by claim 18. It now focuses upon a list of nouns. It allows, over prior art, an unexpected result that reduces the cost of development. By allowing the designer to limit nouns available to the list by situation, the basis of combinatorial explosion is a linear quantity. Verb based systems require direct objects to act upon. Their basis of combinatorial explosion is squared. Combinatorial explosion is a tougher problem in the prior art.

Regarding objections to claims 4, 5, and 6; these claims have been dropped:

Regarding objections to claim 7; claim 7 has been amended by claim 19. As one purpose of this invention is to eliminate control of an avatar, working in this paradigm requires thinking contrary to prior art. Therefore a method to reintroduce prior art in the new paradigm becomes beneficial. That method is enabled in the component of the invention's process where the narrative environment reacts to a noun introduced.

Regarding objections to claims 8 and 9; claim 8 has been amended by claim 20. Claim 9 has been dropped. The objection raised was about characters receiving items as a result of an interaction. Claim 8 and the amended claim 20 did not and do not discuss items gained as a result of interaction. Claim 20 allows for characters to act in a story neutral manner to facility continuity. The proposed invention is very much a step-wise system. Maintaining continuity across noun introductions smoothes out the narrative. This is a problem unrecognized by prior art. Avatars in verb based systems must wait for input, as all their actions depend upon it.

Regarding objections to claims 10 and 11; claims 10 and 11 have been dropped.

Regarding objections to claims 15; claim 15 has been dropped.

Conclusion

For all of the above reasons, applicant submits that the specification and claims are now to proper form, and that the claims all define patentability over the prior art. Therefore he submits that this application is now in condition for allowance, which action he respectfully solicits.

Conditional Request for Constructive Assistance

Applicant has amended the specification and claims of this application so that they are proper, definite, and define novel structure which is unobvious. If, for any reason this application is not believed to be in full condition for allowance, applicant respectfully requests the constructive assistance and suggestions of the Examiner pursuant to M.P.E.P. § 2173.02 and § 707.07(j) in order that the undersigned can place this application in allowable condition as soon as possible and without the need for further proceedings.

Very respectfully,

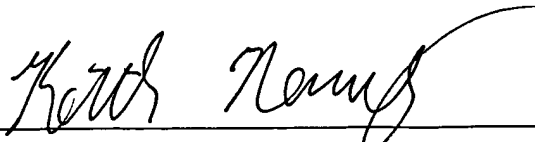


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Certificate of Mailing: I certify that on the date below this document and referenced attachments, if any, will be deposited with the U.S. Postal Service as first class mail in an envelope addressed to: "Mail Stop Amendment, Commissioner for Patents, P.O. Box 1450, Alexandria, VA 22313-1450."

2007 Jan. 29



Keith Nemitz, Applicant

**Attachments:**

1. **Appendix to Amendment B With Replacement Paragraphs Marked-Up to Indicate Changes**
2. **Replacement Drawing, Fig. 1.**
3. **Advertisement for Product Based Upon The Proposed Invention**
4. **Industry Recognition of Innovation**
5. **Positive Product Reviews**